

Informal Leadership Meeting features remarks from SG Greminger, discussions on OSCE PA matters



In an address to the elected leaders of the OSCE PA in an online forum on 29 May, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger discussed the challenges that COVID-19 is posing to multilateral diplomacy and highlighted how the OSCE has responded with flexibility and resilience in the face of the crisis.

SG Greminger noted that the OSCE area is the hardest hit region by the COVID-19 pandemic and that the work of the organization continues to be impacted. The OSCE Secretariat and executive structures operate primarily through telecommuting, he said, and the Trilateral Contact Group as well as the Minsk Group Co-Chairs currently meet online. The Geneva International Discussions, however, have been halted and the work in the Transdniestrian Settlement Process remains disrupted. OSCE field operations have adapted to the situation, offering both a range of short-term and medium-term support to their host countries, he said. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine has continued carrying out its mandate to the extent possible.

“In our region, the pandemic is having an impact on conflicts, on the civilian populations affected by them, and on the various formats attempting to address them. Conflict resolution has become harder, and progress has slowed,” he said.

Nevertheless, he noted that the organization has adapted well to new realities, with videoconferencing continuing to provide a platform for inclusive diplomatic dialogue.

Discussion in the Q&A session focused on the lessons learned from COVID-19, ways to strengthen multilateralism and connectivity as well as ways to streamline OSCE activities. Furthermore, it was pointed out that conflict resolution needs to remain a priority, despite the many other challenges stemming from COVID-19.

Taking note that the OSCE budget had been adopted the previous day, PA Secretary General Roberto Montella pointed out that the OSCE does an extraordinary amount of work with limited financial resources.

In other matters discussed during the informal leadership meeting, Lord Peter Bowness (United Kingdom) presented proposals to review the Assembly’s Rules of Procedure, with a number of issues having been identified during the COVID-19 crisis and the forced cancellation of Assembly meetings. Particularly in focus was the freezing of the Bureau’s composition until the 2021 Annual Session.

Bureau members agreed on the necessity to revise the rules to be able to sufficiently address any unforeseen challenges. OSCE PA President George Tsereteli (Georgia) emphasized that ensuring preparedness for any extraordinary circumstances is necessary and stressed that the PA finds itself in a challenging situation having to freeze the Bureau. He also discussed the Group of Former Members of the PA, which is in the beginning stages of being formulated.

ICYMI: Videos of recent OSCE PA activities online

The OSCE PA has posted videos of recent activities, including the Q&A session with Secretary General Greminger during the informal leadership on 29 May. Watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/oscepa

President Tsereteli issues video message welcoming the Cooperative Security Initiative

In a video message published Wednesday, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli welcomed the Cooperative Security Initiative (CSI) as an important and timely project aiming to engage a broad audience on today’s most pressing security questions. “In this era of pandemic, global tensions and the erosion of multilateral institutions, it is more important than ever to expand the message of co-operative security, utilizing all of our partnerships and networks,” Tsereteli said.

The CSI was launched by two think tanks in June 2019, with the support of Slovakia’s Chairmanship of the OSCE. It is geared towards generating ideas and shifting momentum in favor of co-operative security and multilateralism through the OSCE in order to build a safer Europe.

Watch the video message here: <https://bit.ly/2yYpfOK>



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